

CONFIDENTIAL

ASPIRA

DRAFT

Designing and Planning a National Alumni Organization

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to request financial support to design, plan and implement a national ASPIRA alumni(ae) program using proven ASPIRA community development strategies.

The first phase of this proposal is to engage the Aspira National Board of Directors (which includes alumni and current Aspirantes), the National and Associate Executive Directors and additional alumni and parents of current Aspirantes in an intensive short term design and planning process which will produce an alumni development plan to meet the requirements of each of the participating organizational elements.

The second phase is to implement the development plan using collaborative development processes.

The result of these activities will be an alumni organization rooted in the local activities of the Associates and coordinated through a national alumni organization. These alumni will constitute an active network of alumni who will work collaboratively with current students, families, staff and board to expand and enrich community based, self-help activities.

BACKGROUND:

ASPIRA is a national non-profit organization which provides education and leadership development to Puerto Rican and Latino youth and families. Since its inception in 1961, it is estimated that the organization has had a positive impact on more than 250,000 people. The Aspirantes (students), their families, alumni, the staff and board members who have been a part of Aspira retain strong feelings of loyalty and commitment toward the organization. ASPIRA has not had the capacity (fiscal and human) to nurture these people and to develop formal mechanisms to assure their continued relationship with ASPIRA. Some of the active alumni serve as serve as governing board members at the Associate or national level. They report a strong interest in "paying back"-making a contribution- to their communities among their friends and colleagues

In effect, there is a latent network of thousands waiting to be activated.

The organization consists of a National Office, located in Washington D.C. and ASPIRA Associates located in:

Connecticut
Florida
Illinois
New Jersey

New York
Pennsylvania
Puerto Rico

The heart of the ASPIRA experience is rooted in local communities through a club structure operated by each of the Associates.

Associate
Office

High School Middle School Home Based
Clubs Clubs Clubs

Federation

Local programs emphasize the development of self-confidence, knowledge and skills, and positive self image through program activities which are culturally appropriate. Parental involvement is an integral aspect of the process.

In addition to stimulating local program development and supporting the work of the Associates, the National office manages such national programs as the:

Hispanic Community Mobilization for Dropout Prevention
Public Policy Leadership Program
National Health Careers Program

The ASPIRA National Office and the Associates work closely on the development and conduct of research and advocacy efforts. Since 1985, the Aspira Institute for Policy Research has been the focal point for national research efforts.

Several of the Associates have developed some level of alumni activity. At an ASPIRA Leadership Planning Meeting held earlier this spring, there was agreement that there is a need to develop a national alumni program designed to integrate and strengthen each of the Associates efforts. The Aspirantes attending this meeting expressed an interest in being actively involved. Discussions about the alumni development efforts suggested that the next step in approaching this high priority area was to conduct an intensive planning session at which the details of such a program could be defined.

Alumni development is the next step for ASPIRA, as it continues to develop its organizational capacity to utilize its history, accomplishments and relationships to gain sufficient support to carry it forward to expand its successful program strategies to additional communities while strengthening its existing Associates programs and activities.

PHASE I: DESIGN AND PLANNING

ASSUMPTIONS:

The following assumptions will guide the design and planning process.

1. The development process will be inclusive. National and Associate Board members, national office staff, Associates staff, alumni, Aspirantes, and parents will be involved in the design/planning process.
2. The process will be participative. The design/planning event will use a "charrette" process. A "charrette" is a term originally used in the architectural field. It has been expanded to include an intensive, short term planning/design process during which all parties with a stake in the outcome, work together to design an acceptable facility, program or organization.
3. Alumni are best reached and best utilized at the local community level.
4. The unique interests of the Associates and the national office need to be identified and included in the design process.

This process will result in a design which meets the unique interests and needs of ASPIRA: The National office, the Associates, the Aspirantes, the alumni, and local communities. It will create working partnerships between, board, staff, alumni, Aspirantes, parents and community residents.

Participants in the design and planning process will use the following hypothetical as the basis for their deliberations.

HYPOTHETICAL:

The proposed outcome of this process is to establish Sociedad de Aspirantes, a national organization rooted in communities served by the ASPIRA Associates. The purpose of Sociedad de Aspirantes is to:

- build upon the ASPIRA tradition of giving back to the community.
- create ongoing relationships between past and present ASPIRANTES and staff through joint efforts to identify, recruit and involve alumni, former staff and board members.

- involve the alumni and Aspirantes in a variety of community based, self-help roles such as:

Mentors
 Role Models
 Networkers
 Contributors
 Fund Raisers
 Organizers
 Developers
 Organizers
 Researchers
 Teachers

A key element of the development process and the Society itself will be the involvement of Aspirantes (current students) and available alumni(ae) as core members of a community based development team. The current alumni include both persons who have gone on to successful post secondary education and career experiences as well as former ASPIRA staff who remain committed and involved with the organization. Additional benefits of involvement for the participating Alumni and Aspirantes may be:

- the creation of a professional and academic network of Aspirantes and Alumni.
- an increased capacity to provide data on the effectiveness of the ASPIRA process.
- a vehicle to increase the visibility of ASPIRA as a national Hispanic youth organization.

the opportunities for mutual assistance in such areas as:

employment opportunities
 career development
 post secondary education
 secondary education
 middle school education
 elementary education
 early childhood education

The development teams will work together using a marketing research approach.

The research will be designed to collect, analyze and feed-back information to the development teams so that what is being

learned can contribute to "mid-course" self corrections by the team. The focus of the research will be to identify the alumni, and to involve the Aspirantes (the alumni of the future) and other key participants. The research will determine the actions which would motivate each of the participants to become involved.

The evaluation component of the project will use a "stakeholder" model.

This model allows for each group of persons with a "stake" in the process and outcomes to be involved in the evaluation process.

Once the operations plan is agreed to and funds have been obtained the development teams will be recruited, trained and begin their work.

THE CHARRETTE PROCESS:

Purpose:

The purpose of the process is to produce an operational plan which describes organizational structures and roles of National and Associate efforts, staffing patterns (paid and volunteer), definitions of roles and responsibilities, policies, procedures, and financial requirements.

Staffing:

Once the funding for the project is approved, the National Office will hire a Director of Alumni Development who will be responsible for the planning and conduct of the charrette and implementation of the project. The director will be assisted by the National office staff and one or more consultants with successful experience in the conduct of a charrette.

Participants:

In addition to the National Board, and the Associate Executive Directors, each of the Associates at least two Aspirantes (a Senior and a Junior to assure continuity), a parent and an alumna(us).

The National Office participants will include the National Executive Director, Director of Program Development, Coordinator for Alumni Development, Director of Education, National Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator for Leadership Development and several program coordinators.

Consultants:

There will be two or three consultants available on site during the charrette. The consultants will be responsible for facilitating the plenary sessions. During the work group sessions, the consultants will be available to assist groups in response to a particular request.

Preparation:

Each of the participants will receive a briefing kit two weeks prior to the session. The briefing kit will contain the Hypothetical and a work book which will be organized as an outline of an operational plan (organizational structures and roles of National and Associate efforts, staffing patterns (paid and volunteer), definitions of roles and responsibilities, policies, procedures, and financial requirements) with questions to stimulate discussion and debate about each of the items.

Process:

The following chart summarizes the process.

CHARRETTE PROCESS SUMMARY		
TIME	SESSIONS	CONTENT
DAY 1-AM	Opening Plenary Session	Distal Outcomes Review of Process Use of Work Book Design for Diversity
	Work Groups by Organizational Role	Using hypothetical develop design criteria
	Plenary Session	Work group reports Issue Identification
PM	Work groups by Organizational Role	Develop statement of purpose Distal organizational characteristics and program Business
	Plenary Session	Work group reports
EVE.	Work Groups by Organizational Affiliation	Conditions under which Associates and National offices can develop Alliance
DAY 2-AM	Plenary Session	Report on issues and emergentness
	Work Groups by Work Book Category	Design organizational arrangements
PM	Plenary Session	Report on proposed organizational arrangements
EVE.	Work Groups by Organizational Role	Review and validation
DAY 3-AM	Plenary Session	Work group reports Alliances Recommendations
	Work Group by Organizational Affiliation	Using Work Book develop local work plan
PM	Plenary Luncheon	Report of each work plan Continued work plan agreements

The charrette will be a two and a half day intensive event with morning, afternoon and

evening sessions. Participants will arrive at the site the evening before the opening session. The design effort is intended to be inclusive and to accommodate as broad a perspective as can be designed into an operating organization. The plenary sessions will emphasize the importance of designing a broad inclusive organization rather than seeking consensus and force fitting some important differences. The capacity of the proposed organization to manage such diversity will be directly related to the inclusion of such factors in its organizational design (relationships, policies, procedures, staffing and resource allocation).

The session will open with a plenary session during which the purpose, desired outcomes and the process will be described.

The group will then divide into work groups according to organizational role. There will be 5 work groups:

Associate Executive Directors and National Office
staff

Board Members

Aspirantes

Alumni

Parents

The task of these work groups will be to review the hypothetical and to use it as the basis for designing a national alumni organization with Associate-based chapters. The focus will be to state the purpose and describe the organizational characteristics and program features of a national alumni organization.

These groups will report back to a plenary session. Their reports will include a statement of purpose and a description of desired characteristics and program features. Areas of agreement and disagreement will be noted. The plenary will discuss the reports, explicating the basis of agreements and disagreements.

The participants will then return to their work groups to continue their deliberations based on the information received at the plenary session. By the end of the afternoon work session each group will be prepared to report to the afternoon plenary session. The outcome of the afternoon plenary will be a summary statement of purpose and a checklist of desired characteristics and program features. Any major areas of disagreement will be noted and efforts to clarify and accommodate those differences will take place during this plenary session.

The work groups for the first evening will be composed of the teams by organizational

affiliation (the National Office and the Associates). During these sessions each team will use the statement of purpose and desired characteristics and features developed at the plenary session as their guide. The outcome of this session will be a statement of the conditions under which such an organization could successfully operate. The groups will use the workbook as a guide for their discussion.

The morning of the second day will begin with a plenary session to hear reports from the evening groups. The comments will be organized according to the categories contained in the workbook and other categories added if needed. New work groups will be assigned according to the workbook categories (eg. relations between Associate and National efforts; policies and procedures regarding dues collection and distribution) The distribution of participants in this group will be determined at a later time. More than likely, people whose organizational roles fit a particular topic will work together. For example, the Associate Executive Directors and the National Director might work together to develop policies and procedures for dues collection and distribution. The outcome of this session will be specific operational recommendations for each of the workbook categories.

The work groups will report to a plenary session in the afternoon. At this session efforts will be made to explicate differences and to design organizational capacities to accommodate them.

By the end of this second plenary session there should be a statement of organizational purpose and clearly defined organizational characteristics and desired program features.

The work group meetings during the second evening will be convened according to organizational role, the same as was done for the first set of groups. During this meeting participants will be asked to review the statement of purpose, the organizational characteristics and desired program features. The desired outcome for each of these groups is to formally validate these statements or to state their concerns or qualifications,

The morning of the third day will open with a plenary session to hear the reports of the groups from the preceding evening. Once the affirmations are stated and the concerns and qualifications noted, each of the organizational teams will convene. They will use the data from the previous day and will complete a work book for their unit. The outcome of this group will be outline a workplan for each group which identifies those preferences and conditions which each of the organizational elements identifies as being necessary for their successful participation.

The charrette will conclude with a luncheon during which the results of the meeting will be summarized and a plan for implementation agreed upon.

PHASE II IMPLEMENTATION

Once the Phase One planning and design activities are completed, the work plans reported at

the last plenary session will be summarized and a Project Work Plan will be prepared.

Although the specific workplan is yet to be established, there are several generic elements which are predictable:

Staffing:

In addition to the National Coordinator of Alumni Development, each of the Associates will need support for an additional staff position to work on Alumni development. The position will require at least a half time effort.

The plan will involve Aspirantes in the conduct of survey research of the alumni as well as in the outreach effort. We have assumed that this work should take place as a structured internship so that there is an opportunity to acquire substantive knowledge and skills as part of getting the work done. Financial support for these internships will be required.

We expect the first year of implementation to involve two pilot sites. The first will start immediately at the beginning of the implementation phase and the second to be started at the beginning of the seventh month.

Operating Costs:

There will be additional costs incurred by the National Office and each of the Associates for extensive long distance telephone use as well as for increased printing, duplicating, postage and office supplies. In addition there will be costs for travel between Associate locations and from the National Office to the Associates.

The plan may also require strategic placement of advertising in selected Hispanic media and professional journals.

TIMETABLE:

It is estimated that a staff person could be recruited within 60 days of funds being approved for this project. Pre-planning and material development will take at least three months during which logistics management will also take place. It is anticipated that the Phase I Design and Planning could be completed by the end of six months and that Phase II could be completely implemented within twelve months after that.